

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
GRAND JUNCTION FIELD OFFICE**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range Gather

DOI-BLM-CO-130 2013-0018-EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

The Proposed Action as described in the attached Decision Record is largely similar to the Proposed Action discussed in the Environmental Assessment with the exception of removing the use of helicopter for gather activities in 2013 and 2014.

Background

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO) prepared an Environmental Assessment which analyzed the effects of removing up to 50 excess wild horses by bait/water trapping or possibly by helicopter beginning in August of 2013 in the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range (LBCWHR) located in Mesa County, Colorado. Also under consideration is maintaining the option of gathering in 2014 if gather objectives are not met in 2013. The purpose of the proposed action is to meet the goals and objectives of the LBCWHR Management Plan, which includes maintaining a healthy viable wild horse population in balance with healthy rangelands by maintaining the appropriate management level (AML). The environmental assessment (EA) analyzed two alternatives:

- Proposed Action – Bait or water trapping of up to 50 excess wild horses with the option of using a helicopter if bait/water trapping is not meeting the gather objectives.
- No Action alternative- Do not remove any wild horses

The EA, available at the Grand Junction Field Office or at the following web address is incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The EA was made available for a 30 day comment period ending on July 17, 2013. Approximately 6,520 comments were received.

<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/gjfo.html>

Plan Conformance and Consistency:

The proposed wild horse gather and removal of excess wild horses is in conformance with the Grand Junction Resource Management Plan, Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) (1987) objectives to manage for a balance between a healthy population of wild horses and improvements in range condition, wildlife habitat, and watershed condition.

The proposed action would be in conformance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, (Public Law 92-195 as amended), and with all applicable regulations at 43 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) §4700, and policies outlined by BLM. The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, (P. L. 92-195) as amended, Section 1333 (b) (1), states the Secretary of the Interior shall “determine appropriate management levels of wild free-roaming horses and burros on areas of public lands; and determine whether appropriate management levels should be achieved by the removal or destruction of excess animals, or other options (such as sterilization or natural controls on population levels).” According to 43 CFR §4700.0-6, “Wild horses shall be managed as self-sustaining populations of healthy animals in balance with other uses and the productive capacity of their habitat.”

Reasons for this finding are based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27) with regard to the context and intensity of impacts.

Context: The affected region would be limited to the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range. The environmental analysis was prepared with input from the interested parties.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR §1508.27, BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1), and supplemental Instruction Memoranda and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal and there is no evidence that the severity of impacts would be significant:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. BLM has considered both beneficial and adverse potential impacts in the EA. The action is expected to meet BLM’s objective for wild horse management of maintaining a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship consistent with other resource needs.

2. The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety. The proposed action has no effect on public health or safety.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. The proposed action has minimal potential to affect unique characteristics such as historic or cultural resources. No adverse impacts to the Little Book Cliffs Wilderness Study Area are anticipated. There are no wild and scenic rivers, designated wilderness, or ecologically critical areas present in the area.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. The effects of the proposed action on the quality of the human environment are not considered to be highly controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risks. The BLM has been making decisions on similar actions for many years.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The action is compatible with future consideration of actions required to improve wild horse management in conjunction with meeting objectives for wildlife habitat and achieving and maintaining a thriving natural ecological balance within the herd management area. The decision does not entail any known issues or elements that would create precedent for future wild horse gather decisions. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include actions regardless of land ownership.

The proposed action is not related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts. The proposed action was considered in context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. The proposed action is not related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts.

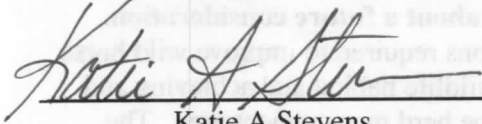
8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. The proposed action has no potential to adversely affect properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and would not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historic resources. Trap sites will be inventoried for cultural and historic resources if the area has not been inventoried previously.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, a species proposed to be listed as endangered or threatened or its habitat, or a species on BLM's sensitive species list. There are no threatened or endangered species located within the project area. The proposed action would have no effect on any other threatened or endangered species or habitat that is critical under the Endangered Species Act, BLM sensitive species, or species proposed for listing as threatened or endangered.

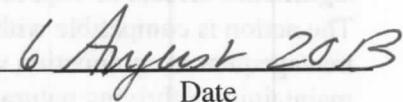
10. Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environmental, where nonfederal requirements are consistent with federal requirements. To the best of my knowledge the proposed action does not threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

DETERMINATION

This FONSI is based on the information contained in the DOI-BLM-CO-130-2013-0018- EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the Proposed Action as described in the attached Decision Record will not have significant environmental impacts; 2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Grand Junction Resource Management Plan; and 3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is not required.



Katie A Stevens
Grand Junction Field Office



Date